

North Carolina Members of Congress.

Speaker BLAINE has made the following assignments of the North Carolina members on committees: O. H. Dockery, Freedmen's Affairs (Chairman), and Claims; John T. Dewese, Revolutionary Pensions (Chairman), Expenditures in the Interior Department (Chairman), and Indian Affairs; David Heaton, Coinage, Weights and Measures (Chairman), and Elections; C. L. Cobb, Roads and Canals, and Expenditures in the War Department; I. G. Lash, Banking and Currency, and Expenditures in the Treasury Department; A. H. Jones, Revolutionary Claims, and Public Expenditures. With the exception of Tennessee, none of the lately reconstructed States have the Chairmanship of a committee except North Carolina, and she has three. But one of these, however, to wit: Freedmen's Affairs, is of any importance. We expect that the Speaker has done as well under the circumstances as could have been expected, for we suppose Mr. Dockery is about the leading Southern Radical member in ability and character.

State Medical Board.

We regret to see an effort made in the Legislature to strike down this excellent institution, and thus to oppose measures protective of the lives and health of the people. It is the duty of the Legislature to foster medical science, and to favor, not oppose, the health and lives of our fellow-citizens. Mr. Welker has introduced in the Senate a bill to demolish the State Medical Board as a useless thing. He is greatly in error, and this step will redound, if successful, to the injury of the State and works every way wrong and evil to the people.

The State Medical Board is part and parcel of that most praiseworthy object of the medical profession of the State, to advance medical science, and protect the health and lives of the people. What avails all efforts at human improvement and material prosperity, if sickness is not attended to and health is not preserved as far as possible? What can man do if he is sickly and enfeebled by disease? Now the object of this Medical Board is to give health, life, energy, ability to labor to our fellow-citizens of all classes and conditions in our impoverished and depressed condition. It is the offspring of the labor, patient, persevering, devoted labor, for a number of years, of leading members of the medical profession in our State. It works wrong to no one. It is part of that great movement in this State for many years past of medical men, who are liberal, scientific, humane professors, and determined to do all in their day and generation for the promotion of medical science, the usefulness of the medical profession, and the good of the public at large. It is a part of the State Medical Society, that has been a pioneer in North Carolina in all those measures promotive of medical science and skill, and in all those plans for improving the health of the people, which are approved by all recognized doctrines of political economy and sustained by all the leading men of the State, of all occupations and professions, who are devoted to North Carolina, and who have worked and are working for her best good.

What are the provisions of the law establishing this Medical Board? It says to no one, "you shall not give medicine, nor practice medicine;" no arbitrary measures of this sort does it inculcate or justify. Nothing of the kind. It opens the door to any and all, white or black, native or foreign, to come in and administer medicines to whoever will take them—to give what you please and do what you please in the sick room so long as the sick will take your medicines. The law establishing the Board is not arbitrary, not oppressive, not unjust in any manner, shape or form. Any one can, under its operation, practice medicine and surgery in the State. The only clause or feature of the law to which objection is made, is that no one can, since the organization of the Board, collect by law, fees for medical services who have, without license from the Board, commenced practice after the Board was established. He must produce a certificate—a diploma—from this Board that he is possessed of good moral character, and possesses the proper knowledge and professional qualifications before he can collect his bills by law. All this is conservative, wise, necessary, practical, and patriotic. The Board was founded on that necessity of protection to health which arises from the miserable scramble for patronage, and that reckless competition for patronage and power, which exists among the Medical Colleges of the country. So long has this existed, so great is the degrading and abominable struggle for numbers, money, influence among the Medical Colleges of the country that the standard of the Professor has been lowered, and swarms of Doctors have been sent out upon the community from these Medical Hives, with diplomas in hand, many of whom are incompetent, morally and every other way, to engage in the solemn and responsible duties of medical and surgical practice. North Carolina has no Medical Colleges, and it is rather to her credit than discredit that she has not, owing to this prevailing disposition of the Medical Colleges to graduate men who are able to pay their way, without regard to qualification. As a means of protection, to some extent, to the people against incompetent practitioners, this Board was instituted years ago, and it has worked well every way—is no expense to the State, is self-sustaining, is composed of leading and progressive medical men, chosen by the voice of the profession, through the State Medical Society, and sustained everywhere when understood by an enlightened public sentiment. This Board, together with the State Medical Society, has done more to advance medical science, protect public health, and promote the dignity and usefulness of the medical profession than all other means combined. It has given the profession of the State a name and character, at home and abroad, of which the

physicians of North Carolina and the whole State may well be proud.

Why then should such an Institution, that calls for no revenue or money from the State to sustain it, that is self-supporting, that is composed of practitioners who eminently enjoy the confidence of the public, that adds to public health, and thus to the productive industry and to the comfort and happiness of all classes, be stricken down by the Legislature. It is no party measure. It was enacted by legislators of all parties, and appeals for support from all parties of all classes, and from men of all parties, and from citizens of all Churches, and of no Church, and from all men who wish for the best good of the State.

We trust it may not be repealed. Let the general work of change and destruction spare this monument of the liberality, humanity and wisdom of the past. Encourage, rather than embarrass, and not oppose the benevolent, scientific, enterprising measures of the Medical Profession of the State to elevate their standard, and to benefit the health and protect the lives of the community.

We appeal to members of the Legislature of all parties to reject this attempt to injure a profession that we all should desire to see improved and promoted in all these laudable efforts of the State Medical Society, and the County Auxiliary Medical Societies to do good; to cure disease; to assuage the sorrows and pains of the human family, and to benefit the State at large. We shall recur again to this subject.

Wilmington Presbytery.

Notice is given by the Rev. L. McKinnon, Stated Clerk, that the Presbytery of Wilmington will meet in the Presbyterian Church, in the town of Clinton, on Thursday, the 1st day of April, at 12 o'clock M. There will be conveyances at Warsaw on Wednesday evening, March 31st, to convey persons desiring to attend, to Clinton.

Travel, North and South.

We are glad to know that the Atlantic Seaboard route is becoming very popular with travelers. And we are not surprised, for the lines of roads along the seaboard, between New York and New Orleans, certainly offer more inducements to the traveler than any other. Having recently occasion to travel South we were struck with the great attention paid to the comfort of the passenger. From Wilmington to West Point, Ga., a distance of five hundred and fifty miles, there is no change of cars. One can hardly appreciate the comfort of this arrangement until he tries it. The confusion of the continued changes, the scramble for seats, the exposures to bad weather at all hours of the night are all avoided. The night trains are provided with elegant sleeping cars which are attended to with scrupulous neatness. On the Georgia road, from Augusta to Atlanta, the sleeping cars are without exception the most magnificent we have ever seen. We had occasion to examine some on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad recently, but they will in no measure compare with those on the Georgia Railroad. The schedules are adjusted so that the passengers are not aroused too early, and in every respect his comfort is consulted without any sacrifice to speed or safety.

There is one matter which Railroad officials might turn their attention to, and the passengers would be benefited. The eating houses along the route are not as good as they should be. There are two exceptions to which we refer with pleasure. Mrs. Brothers, at Flemington, on the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad, and the house at Stone Mountain, on the Georgia Railroad, are both superior eating houses, and their proprietors receive the thanks of hungry and weary travelers. We heard the hotel at Florence well spoken of, but we did not eat there.

With the completion of the bridge here, which will be finished at an early day, the popularity of this route will increase. The disagreeable delay and ferriage across the Cape Fear will be avoided, and the change of cars will take place under a shed. We look to see through cars for Aquia Creek and Norfolk running with each train from this city North, thus avoiding useless changes of cars and detentions. A renewed prosperity will enable our roads to be re-laid with new iron, when the speed and comforts of travel will be increased. Then there can be no line which will give as great inducements to travelers as this one.

A New Invention—Fibrous Composition Slabs and Panels for Roofs and Walls of Buildings, &c.

A patent was obtained a few days ago by the American Fibre Company for an entirely novel mode of constructing roofs and walls of buildings, water-proof floors, tanks, &c.

The fibre used is made from the cane or reeds of the cane-brakes of the Carolinas and other Southern States, disintegrated by the explosive force of steam by the process which is in operation in this city. The Richmond Dispatch gives this account of the new invention, by which this fibre is now being used for roofing. As we are sadly in need of fire-proof roofs in Wilmington, and which are now constructed at great cost, we give it not only as opening a new branch of business, but which must result in great benefit to our city. The fibre as it comes from the steam gun is in the shape of long, fine tendrils, resembling oakum. This fibre is twisted or spun into a single yarn or strand, several of which strands are interlaced so as to form a stout matting, which is charged with a composition of tar and pulverized slate or soapstone, limestone, &c., forced into and amongst the fibres by great pressure, so as to make a solid slab. The fibre being thoroughly disintegrated and very absorbent, forms a good base for the mastic. A series of these slabs made with rabbit-joints are joined together and nailed to the rafters, the joints are cemented, and then another series of the slabs, made in the same manner, are laid over the others so as to break joints in every direction, the upper series being fastened to the lower with a mastic composed of the pulverized slate, etc., and tar, and the joints being cemented together. A light, strong, solid, indestructible slab is thus produced thoroughly water-proof and practically fire-proof also. A similar composition,

used for roofs in Montreal and New Orleans, is unaffected by the heat or cold.

As the steam-blown reed fibre can be supplied from Norfolk, Va., and Wilmington, N. C., to New York, Richmond, Baltimore, Boston, etc., for fifteen to twenty dollars per ton, and the pulverized slate can be obtained at about the same price, and the tar is cheap also, it is claimed that this invention secures the cheapest as well as the best and most durable roof ever made.

The roof resembles a solid block of slate or stone about an inch thick. A coating of sand is forced into the composition so as to lighten the color and make it resemble stone. The cost is less than that of a tin roof.

The inventors propose to make the same slabs available for the outer walls of buildings in lieu of bricks, stone or wood. The same company have also obtained a patent for a substitute for lath and plaster. For this purpose fibrous composition panels are made by the above method from the steam blown cane fibre, in combination with silicate of soda (liquid flint), lime and clay. These panels are fire proof, and well adapted for ceilings, inner walls and floors, also for cabins of steamboats and railway cars. It is claimed that the fibrous composition panels are much cheaper than lath and plaster, and that they do not warp, crack, peel, crumble or decay, and that they keep out heat and cold.

Certainly these inventions open a wide field of usefulness. They seem to be based upon the most practical ideas, and in fact have been tested to sufficient extent to establish their utility. As already stated in this paper, it is designed to erect in this city a manufactory of boards out of the cane fibre.

Political Disabilities.

The action of the House upon the question of the removal of political disabilities may be a matter of curiosity to some, certainly of interest to a very few. Possibly the different feeling displayed by the colored member, Price, from the two carpet-baggers who represent New Hanover in the House, may be a matter of interest for future reference. No doubt the course of Price will be endorsed by the colored voters of the county, while that of their white representatives is dictated by malice and selfishness. It would be expecting too much of men to aid in removing the disabilities of intelligent and virtuous citizens, when by this very means they have acquired temporary prominence.

A POSTOFFICE ROBBER ARRESTED.—Yesterday detective W. H. Moore (colored) arrested in our city a freedman named Robert Guiver, on the ground of breaking into the Postoffice at Magnolia on the night of Saturday, the 13th instant, and robbing it of some \$30 in money contained in letters and a quantity of postage stamps. Guiver came to this city on Tuesday night last, and after he left Magnolia he was suspected of the robbery. These suspicious were communicated to the officers of this city. Dr. Jobe, the special agent of the department, himself came here with a warrant for Guiver's arrest. The officers have been on his track for some time, but he left the city for the Sound during the week, and did not return until Friday night. After being arrested he confessed the extent of his guilt to the City Marshal, and gave an account of his movements in detail since the robbery was committed. He was sent to jail yesterday morning, to await an examination before United States Commissioner Rutherford to-morrow (Monday) morning.—Daily Journal to-morrow.

RED KNIFE;

KIT CARSON'S LAST TRAIL.

By LEON LEWIS.

AUTHOR OF "THE WAGON TRAIN," "THE WITCH FINDER," "THE WATER WOLF," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A LIFE GLORIOUSLY STAKED! Towards the close of a beautiful day in June, 1867, a man and woman, mounted upon fleet horses, came galloping over one of the great plains of the West, and drew rein in the shade of a clump of cottonwoods upon the bank of a beautiful river. They had ridden far and rapidly. Their steeds were panting, and covered with sweat and foam.

"We must give the horses a breathing spell," said the former, slipping to the ground; and his companion nodded a grateful assent, as she followed his example. The couple were evidently father and daughter.

The man was in the prime of life, hale and hearty, with a large frame, which was sinewy and athletic, without ceasing to be refined and prepossessing. He had the keen, shrewd look peculiar to the advance guards of civilization, and there was an honest, frank expression on his sun-browned face that proclaimed his integrity and courage.

In her way, his daughter was equally picturesque and attractive. In the early flush of womanhood, with a pure, sweet, and tender face, with eyes darkly glowing with intelligence, and cheeks softly flushed with the hue of the rose, with amber curls floating behind her, she was as graceful as a gazelle, as light-hearted as a bird, as lovely as a flower, and as spirited as an untamed antelope.

The stream by which the couple had halted was Wood river, a branch of the Platte, in Nebraska, at a point fifty miles northwest of Fort Kearny.

"Are you tired, Miriam?" asked the hunter, George Dane, with fatherly solicitude.

"Tired, father?" rejoined the maiden, with a happy laugh. "Oh, no. How could I be tired after a day like this? Every minute has been filled with pleasure and excitement. I feel as fresh as yonder bird."

The father smiled understandingly, with a look full of the fondest affection.

"I can guess the cause of your lightness of heart," said he smilingly. "The return, now daily expected, of a certain Hubert Earle, from the mine of Idaho, may account, I suspect, for your present gladness."

A heightened color appeared on Miriam's face, for the name mentioned was that of her lover. She answered the glances of her father, however, with a frankness that attested his entire sympathy with her, and said:

"True, father, my heart has been unusually light for several days past. How could it be otherwise, since I know that Hubert is coming?"

Mr. Dane did not reply. He was looking, with kindling eyes, over the fair forehead plain; and his next remark showed how widely his thoughts had strayed.

"I wonder what mother has been doing

without us all day, Miriam. She must be lonely, with no one to speak to or share her meals. I shouldn't wonder if we could see our home from this point, and the lighted up with a soulful glow. Our cottage is not more than seven miles distant; let me see."

He drew from his coat a pocket-glass, adjusted it to his sight, pointing it in a northerly direction, and gazed through it long and earnestly, towards his ranch upon Caray's Fork.

"Yes, I see it," he said, at last, with a long, deep, and joyful inspiration, as if the sight refreshed him in every nerve. "There is our cottage, as plain as day. I can even see the vines you planted before the windows, Miriam. And there, on the grape-vine bench, under the big elm, sits your mother, busy at her sewing. Bless her! She does not imagine we are looking at her. Look, Miriam."

He yielded the instrument to his daughter, who obeyed his injunction, her lovely face glowing with smiles as she regarded the vision of her childhood home. "Dear mother!" she murmured. "It is a treat to be able to sit out under the trees without fear of molestation. There are no hostile Indians hereabout now—are there farther?"

No. Red Knife, as you have already heard, was killed yesterday by a settler, and his band has retired towards the mountains. I will confess, Miriam, that during all the time we have been in the West, I have not felt so light-hearted and care-free as since we have received news of Red Knife's death. You have just seen how this joy bubbles over me. Red Knife was a demon rather than a savage."

Miriam shuddered, and her features even paled at the memory of the Indian mentioned.

He never spared a pain, she said, "striving to reach the resolution and cruelty marked his path. For more than three years he has raged to and fro upon the plains like a ravening wolf. He was the terror of the border."

"You have named him appropriately, Miriam," said the hunter. "He had a hellish hatred of the white race, and his victims have been many."

Mr. Dane held out his hand for the glass, and Miriam was in the act of restoring it, when a strange, grasping, panting sound startled them both, and sent them quickly to their steeds.

The hunter wheeled his horse and looked down upon the river bank, from which direction the sound had come, his manner self-possessed, but his countenance indicative of alarm. The maiden followed his example.

Their eyes were the first to discover the cause of the sound that had startled them, detecting a man's figure creeping along through the undergrowth of bushes lining the shore.

At the same moment, their presence in the forest, for the man dropped suddenly among the protecting bushes, as if he had been shot.

"An Indian?" whispered Miriam, drawing from her bosom a revolver.

The hunter shook his head, continuing to watch the spot at which the man had fallen, his hand on his rifle, his manner that of one ready for action.

Suddenly, as the man showed a haggard face peering cautiously from his concealment, Mr. Dane's anxious countenance broke into a smile, and he cried out:

"Hullo! Is that you, Thompson? Do you tell me you are alone, that you skulk there in the bushes?"

The individual addressed was silent a full minute, as it seemed, from sheer amazement; then he sprang out from his hiding-place with a cry of relief, and advanced swiftly towards the father and daughter.

He was a man of middle age, of the ordinary type of backwoodsman, strong and brown and stalwart, of the rude, rough type that seems to belong to the border. His face was haggard and white, although covered with perspiration. His breath came in quick, short gasps, and he had run far and swiftly, and looked as if about to drop from fatigue.

"What has happened, Thompson?" asked Dane, with keen anxiety, the man's singular appearance giving him a sudden shock.

"The Indians!" gasped Thompson, scarcely able to command his voice. "They are coming! Red Knife and his band—divided—my wife—my children!—Help me!—Help me!"

"What talk is this?" cried Dane, agitated in spite of his efforts at self-control. "Red Knife was killed yesterday."

"He was only wounded," interrupted Thompson. "He is coming to take his vengeance on us settlers. He has divided his band into two. They were up at the Deer Fork this morning, and are now coming this way. The points to be struck is your house and mine."

"My God!" ejaculated Dane, as his informant paused in his excited, breathless narration.

"A horse! a horse!" cried Thompson, reaching for his rifle. "I can go no further on foot. My wife, my children—God pity and save them!"

He looked from the hunter to his daughter in agonized and mute supplication.

Dane snatched the glass from Miriam's hands and placed it to his eyes.

He looked to the north—saw his pretty cottage, his wife busy at her needle under the trees—and glanced at the dim line of the horizon stretching away eastward and westward from his home.

Suddenly the glass dropped from his hands—his face blanched to the hue of snow. From the west seeming to emerge from the clouds of scarlet and gold, he beheld a band of mounted Indians riding boldly toward that unprotected home, towards that unconscious and helpless woman.

With a frenzied cry, he put spurs to his horse, and dashed off, shouting to his daughter to follow him; the same instant Thompson staggered forward and fell in the maiden's path, holding up his hands in anguish.

"My wife! my children!" he groaned. "There is hesitation in the soul of the brave Miriam."

"Mine is but a single life; he has seven depending on him," she said, aloud. As she spoke, she leaped from her saddle, and, with a gesture, commanded him to take her place.

"But you danger!" faltered Thompson. "The Indians—"

Miriam again pointed to the saddle. "Go," she commanded. "Think only of your family, and be gone!"

Still Thompson hesitated, sweeping the horizon with eager glances, to assure himself that no immediate danger threatened.

A lonely and desolate spot," said Hubert, thoughtfully. "It looks as if man had never before visited it."

"And no wonder," returned Brydges, "since it's five miles off the route. What could any man want here, unless he might be in pursuit of buffaloes?"

There being no answer to this question, Hubert proceeded to find an excellent grazing spot for his horse, tethered him, and flung himself on the ground in the shadow of the hill. The lieutenant and a portion of the men followed his example.

Plenty of low bushes were found dry enough to burn, and several fires were soon kindled. The choicest portions of buffaloes were readily prepared for cooking, and it was not long before the odor of burning flesh was diffused on the air; four or five hungry soldiers serving as cooks.

are coming! The leader is Red Knife. Go, neighbor Thompson—on the instant!"

"We can ride together!" cried Thompson. "No! The horse is tired. We have been to Willow Island. We should be overtaken before we had gone two miles!"

"Then we'll die together!"

"No! No! You must mount!"

With a grasp so sudden and firm that it startled him, the maiden pushed him towards the horse, and in another instant he found himself more by instinct than by thought, seated in the saddle.

"Away, Selim!" cried Miriam to her steed, with an imperative gesture. "Away!"

The horse broke furiously over the plain, giving Thompson only time enough to flash a look of gratitude towards the maiden, as he dashed away to the northeast, towards his menaced home.

A moment later, Mr. Dane looked over his shoulder—took in at a glance the situation of affairs, recognizing the peril as well as the heroism of his child—bowed his head solemnly, as one submits to the inevitable, in approbation of her conduct, and then he swept on to the rescue of his wife, his soul torn by such emotions as are seldom brought to battle together.

And Miriam, throwing herself flat upon the ground, remained alone upon the plain, in the very path of a score of mounted Indians, who were galloping towards her with the swiftness of the wind!

CHAPTER II.

A CURIOUS AND STARTLING MYSTERY.

Skirting the Black Hills, forty miles west of Fort Laramie, a party of horsemen were riding eastward.

They had left Fort Bridger eight days before, taking the route of the North Platte, and were following the Oregon emigrant trail, among those long ridges, dry beds of rivers, and sterile plains, by which the region of the Black Hills is distinguished.

The bulk of the party consisted of ten cavaliers, under a lieutenant, who were returning to Fort Laramie, their post of duty. They were well mounted, and had several led horses in their train, loaded with their provisions and appurtenances of travel.

The balance of the party comprised three civilians, who had seized the opportunity of crossing the mountains under military escort. Two of these were emigrants who had settled near Fort Bridger, but who had tired of the great solitude, or been frightened by the Indians, and were now returning eastward in search of homes nearer the heart of civilization.

The third civilian was Hubert Earle, the lover of Miriam Dane, the settler's daughter, whom we have just left in such deadly peril.

He was a splendid specimen of American manhood, magnificently formed, broad shouldered, deep-chested, as vigorous as an athlete, and rode his horse, a fiery Mexican steed, with the grace and ease of a Centaur.

At the moment of his introduction to the reader, he was riding in the rear of the lieutenant, who was riding in the lead, followed by the two emigrants, who were riding in the middle of the column.

His thoughts were wrapt in the sweet memory of Miriam, who had wept so bitterly at his departure, and who, he expected, would smile joyfully at his return.

"The dear little soul!" he murmured aloud. "Where is she now?"

His eyes darkened with tender sweetness, his lips quivered with the ineffable love that flooded his being with a happiness akin to pain. He pictured their meeting so pretty home, and would share together, the years they would spend in each other's society, the tender mutual love and care that would bless all their coming days.

He had left her a poor adventurer, to seek his fortune among the mines of Idaho, but he had returned to her a moderately rich man, with bills of exchange in his chambray money-belt of sufficient value to support them both in luxury as long as they might live.

It was not to be wondered at that his thoughts were pleasant.

Suddenly he was aroused from his trance-like silence, by cries of delight from his companions, and by the fact that they had checked their speed.

Looking around him quickly, he beheld the cause of the unusual excitement. To the southward, at no great distance, a small herd of buffaloes was grazing lazily, seemingly unmolested by the near presence of a formidable enemy.

The wind was blowing from them, the horses were fresh, and, as he looked at the tempting game, Hubert felt the spirit of the hunter grow strong within him.

Looking back at his horse, he galloped along the line to speak to the lieutenant, who was met half way by that officer, whose sparkling eyes and eager demeanor attested to a kindling of Nimrod-like zeal.

"What do you say to an hour's sport, Mr. Earle?" shouted the lieutenant, as he smiled at his friend, for Hubert was a decided favorite with every member of the party.

"I think it would be a downright shame to turn our backs on such a splendid game," was the quick response. "Who could eat a dinner of salt pork, with those fat buffaloes so near us?"

Hubert glanced up and down the line, reading eager longing in the faces of his men, and resolved to carry out his own and the general desire.

At a word of command from him, the party set out at a quick gallop for the scene of action.

The buffaloes allowed the enemy to approach quite near, the wind favoring the hunters; but at length began to snort, and uneasily to shake their heads, and to look for the cause of their apprehensions.

A moment later they had beheld the enemy, and, with frightful howlings and mighty tramp, had begun their wild, mad flight to the southward.

The chase was a long one; and it was not till the hunters had run the buffaloes upon a spur of the Black Hills that they got a good chance at them. They then brought down several plump young buffaloes, and dinner suddenly became the watchword.

"It is noon, and we'll have dinner," said the lieutenant, observing that the baggage animals with their drivers were approaching. "Kindle a fire, boys, and we'll have steaks and roasts in abundance."

While this order was being carried into effect, Hubert and several others were engaged in surveying the scene.

"A lonely and desolate spot," said Hubert, thoughtfully. "It looks as if man had never before visited it."

"And no wonder," returned Brydges, "since it's five miles off the route. What could any man want here, unless he might be in pursuit of buffaloes?"

There being no answer to this question, Hubert proceeded to find an excellent grazing spot for his horse, tethered him, and flung himself on the ground in the shadow of the hill. The lieutenant and a portion of the men followed his example.

Plenty of low bushes were found dry enough to burn, and several fires were soon kindled. The choicest portions of buffaloes were readily prepared for cooking, and it was not long before the odor of burning flesh was diffused on the air; four or five hungry soldiers serving as cooks.

It was a wild picnic scene on those lone-

ly wild, and every man there enjoyed it with true gipsy zest.

Suddenly a shout from one of the men who were strolling around, arrested the attention of the others.

"Hullo, boys!" he cried. "I'm blest if here isn't a cave in the hill! Come, see the hole under these bushes. You never saw anything hidden nearer to your lives."

"Jones thinks nobody ever saw a cave before," said one of the loungers. "For my part, I think more of something to eat, than a hole in the ground."

This sentiment was echoed by the others, but the inquisitive cave discoverer, notwithstanding, approached the fire, took from it a torch, returned to the bushes, parted the bushes, revealing a dark aperture in the face of the rock, and disappeared within it, his light giving back a yellow glare for a second after he had ceased to be seen.

The camp revelry went on, the cooking progressed, the minutes passed, and Jones did not reappear.

"If that fellow had found a gold mine in there he wouldn't call on us," growled the loungers who had before spoken. "I wonder what Jones has found. I'll just take a look at dinner isn't ready?"

He next daily, abstracted a stick of burning wood for a torch, proceeded to the cavern entrance, and disappeared from view.

"Probably," said Hubert, "there's a large cavern under that hill. If we had time, it might pay to explore it. Under the present circumstances, I am like Brown, and prefer my dinner to scientific explorations."

The meal seemed to be nearly ready, for the rattling of tin cups and dishes began to be heard; the lieutenant's small camp-chest was unpacked, and the cooks shouted to the stragglers to come to dinner.

"The lieutenant," as he rode to a sitting position, and glanced towards the cavern.

The men replied in the negative.

"Go after them then, King, and hurry them up," said the officer. "We must resume the march after dinner, and cannot afford to waste time here."

King, a fine young soldier, took a torch and entered the cave.

The dinner was dealt out—hot savory steaks and roasts—the coffee measured, and the meal commenced, but none of the men who had entered the cave made their appearance.

"How singular!" ejaculated Brydges, testily and impatiently. "What can keep those men? King has been gone ten minutes. Here, Sergeant Finley, hurry those men up!"

The sergeant, a brown, strong man of middle age, hesitated, and ventured to stammer:

"Beg your pardon, Lieutenant, but I think there's something wrong inside the cave. There's three men in there—all hungry and knowing that dinner's ready. Surely they'd come out if they could. Perhaps there's wild beasts, or some strange kind of gas that smothers 'em, or—"

"Nonsense, Sergeant!" interrupted the lieutenant, frowning. "I give you five minutes to bring those men back. Go!"

The sergeant's face paled, but, without another word, he took up a torch and entered the cave, disappearing from the gaze of his friends.

The minutes passed, the lieutenant and the men ate their dinner mechanically, awaiting anxiously the expected return; yet none of the four came back.

The words of the sergeant had made a deep impression on the minds of his hearers. A general gloom fell upon the camp, and the men cast frequent and fearful glances in the direction of the cavern. Even the lieutenant and Hubert felt a strange depression creeping over them, which neither could resist.